



Animas-La Plata Project

Chronology of Events

The Animas-La Plata Project (ALP), located in southwestern Colorado and Northwestern New Mexico, has been the focus of substantial public interest and environmental review since it was authorized. The following is a brief chronology of the project.

◆ **1968** – Congress authorized construction of the Animas-La Plata Project as a multi-purpose project with a projected water supply of nearly 191,200 acre-feet for irrigation, municipal and industrial use purposes in Colorado and New Mexico.

◆ **1980** – The Bureau of Reclamation released a Final Environmental Statement for the Animas-La Plata Project.

◆ **1980-81** – With construction of the ALP Project set to begin, the Carter Administration suspended the initiation of new public works water projects.

◆ **1986** – The Department of the Interior accepts a cost-sharing arrangement that calls for state and local entities to provide 38% of the up-front funding for the Project, resulting in phasing the Project.

◆ **1988** – Congress passed the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement Act to resolve the senior water rights claims of the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes. The Act allowed future

development of the region and protected existing water uses.

◆ **1990** – Based on new biological information, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a draft biological opinion concluding that the project would jeopardize the existence of the Colorado pikeminnow. No reasonable and prudent project alternatives were identified at this time.

◆ **1991** – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Final Biological Opinion that contained a reasonable and prudent alternative that limited project water depletions from the Animas River to 57,100 acre-feet per year and included an endangered fish recovery program. The Biological Opinion lifted impediments to construction of the project.

◆ **1992** – Legal actions brought forward by environmental organizations halted construction of the project.

◆ **1996** – Reclamation released a Final Supplement to the Animas-La Plata Environmental Impact Statement.

◆ **1996-97** – Colorado Governor Romer and Lt. Governor Schoettler held meetings with supporters and opponents of the project to address unresolved concerns associated with the original ALP Project specifications and to gain consensus on future project

alternatives. The meetings resulted in proposals for structural and nonstructural alternatives.

◆ **1998** – The Department of Interior recommended construction of a substantially scaled-down project. The scaled-down alternative was recommended as a means to address the Colorado Ute Tribes long-standing water right claims and to provide a solution for municipal and industrial water needs in the project area. The proposal downsized the project to comply with Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act requirements.

◆ **2000** – Reclamation released a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision that identified the scaled-down project as the preferred alternative. The scaled down alternative provided the Colorado Ute tribes with an assured water supply and contained both structural and nonstructural components. Because this alternative would provide benefits to the Colorado Ute Tribes that were not identical to those envisioned in the 1988 Settlement, it was recognized that Congressional authorization was needed to achieve final implementation.

◆ **2000** – Congress authorized the scaled-down project with the passage of the Colorado Ute Settlement Act Amendments of 2000. These amendments authorized construction of a reservoir, pumping plant and inlet conduit with an average

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annual depletion of 57,100 acre-feet. The amendments also establish a Colorado Ute Settlement Fund for generating appropriations for the construction of the project features within a 7-year period. Additionally, the Amendments established a \$40 million Resource Fund for the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Indian Tribes for municipal and rural water development, as well as resource acquisition and enhancement;

◆ 2001 - Approval was granted by the Reclamation's Commissioner John W. Keys to initiate construction on the Animas-La Plata Project and establishes November 9, 2001 as the date of formal initiation of construction. Also, in 2001 the final design for the dam and pumping plant began.

◆ 2002 - There were four major tasks initiated this year. First, field work began on the cultural resource mitigation program within the project area. Second, construction began on the inlet conduit pipeline sleeve at the site where a natural gasline crosses the path of the inlet conduit. The inlet conduit will carry project water from the Animas River to Ridges Basin Reservoir. The inlet conduit sleeve was completed in October of 2002. Third, Weemuniche Construction Authority began constructing haul roads to facilitate traffic during the construction of the dam and outlet works, and excavation started on the dam outlet portal. Last, a final route selection for the Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline was initiated.

